



THE SUDD INSTITUTE

RESEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL, JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOUTH SUDAN

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POLICY BRIEF

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The Impacts of Violence on Education in South Sudan

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Summary

Basic education is a fundamental economic necessity, but circumstances such as armed violence often make its effective provision quite grim. This is particularly pertinent in South Sudan where the delivery of social services has been greatly undermined by a recent violence. This policy brief analyzes the impacts of South Sudan's ongoing violence on education in the three states of Upper Nile. Our findings indicate that the war has led to pronounced reductions in educational activities and resources in the area, with school closure and mass outmigration as a result. We recommend to both the government and the humanitarian community to pay considerable attention to the educational priorities of the communities in question, paying teachers regularly, and supplying necessary inputs for continued learning in the area. Continued investments in education, even in the time of mass violence, reduce future social injustice and set stage for needed stability in the country.

I. Introduction

A six-month old conflict in South Sudan has resulted in a significant reduction in basic services, particularly in the three states of the Upper Nile region. In education, for example, national exams were postponed, teachers' salaries have been withheld, and schools have been closed (Education Cluster 2014). The negative impacts of civil violence on social programs are significant. Social programs, such as health and education, often become casualties of war, retarding future economic opportunities of an exposed cohort. Conflict intensity in particular plays a fundamental role in negatively influencing human capital growth in the affected generation (Chamarbagwala et al 2008). Large-scale violence undermines educational processes since it often uproots institutions, dislocates human resources, and decimates economic and infrastructural systems of a society (Blattman 2010). Moreover, these taxing outcomes of

war readily lead to poor health among children, school age or otherwise (Minoiu and Shemyakina 2012).

Since violence is disruptive and varies in magnitude and extent, its consequences can be both short- and long-term. Bircan et al (2010) find that violence results in considerable lull in service provision, increasing social inequality ‘during war and especially in the early period of post-war reconstruction.’ While such deleterious effects can either be temporary or long lasting, they have substantial implications for post-conflict reconstruction agenda. For instance, children who experience violence after being enrolled in school are more likely to regain pace when peace returns; in contrast, those exposed to conflict prior to school enrollment suffer long-term formal skill development deficits (Leon 2012). In particular, an average child exposed to war prior to enrolling in school loses roughly 0.21 years of education (Leon 2012).

The consequences of war on education are often greater for women than for men (Leon 2012; Shemyakina 2007). More specifically, Chamarbagwala et al (2008) document that girls who are exposed to violence experience a deficit of 0.44 years in schooling. But the same study also shows that adult males exposed to violence are less likely to finish either junior high or high school (Chamarbagwala et al 2008).

Educational processes are effective when there is peace, allowing for competitive human capital accumulation in the citizenry. Violence, however, degrades socioeconomic conditions and produces pronounced social inequalities among members of a population, invoking an intervention that responds to both immediate and long-term consequences of war-induced socioeconomic disparities (Shemyakina 2007). This brief looks at how the current South Sudanese violence has impacted educational processes in the predominantly affected region of Upper Nile. We primarily discuss the underlying implications of war on education and what to do to mitigate them. Our concern emanates from the fact that large-scale violence robs societies of informed and productive human resources, ultimately perpetuating social injustice and physical instability in the nation.

The rest of the brief proceeds as follows. Section II covers current educational conditions in the Upper Nile region and focuses on war-induced economic changes. Section III offers crucial insights into ongoing humanitarian efforts toward educational provision in the region. Section IV concludes with policy suggestions.

II. Current Educational Conditions in Upper Nile

The Education Cluster of Save the Children and UNICEF (2014) provides evidence on the effects of the current violence on educational processes in Upper Nile since late last year. The Cluster indicates that roughly 1,200 schools in the three states of Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Unity have been discontinued due to insecurity and lack of necessary resources. This closure of educational institutions translates into hundreds of thousands of children and adolescents facing considerable loss of economically enriching opportunities, a potential recipe for future regional economic inequalities, laying a foundation for persistent conflict in the country. Moreover, as many as 9,000 children are feared of being conscripted into the fighting forces as child soldiers since the war commenced last

year. Being a child soldier simply implies derailed economic opportunism as an adult. As well, as many as 90 schools now shelter the internally displaced and soldiers, turning them into habitats that are no longer suitable for learning. Even more worrying is that the interference of conflict with the educational processes in the region has resulted in mass migration for thousands of children and families who have been forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries or local communities, essentially making homes in protection camps where learning conditions are equally dilapidated or non-existent.

Since the CPA era education has been of little importance to the government of South Sudan, with the current rebellion increasingly exacerbating this problem. South Sudan's budget allocation on the education sector has been exceptionally low, standing between 5 and 7 percent per year, and represents the lowest in the world (Good Planet Foundation 2013). But the actual spending by the sector is closer to only 4 percent. This is in contrast, for example, 40 percent of the total annual budget allocated for the security sector. Before the December 2013 violence, primary education enrollment in South Sudan was exponentially growing at a rate of 5.7 percent, a positive manifestation of peace dividend (Mayai et al 2011; in GoSS Comprehensive Evaluation). However, growth in the student population was met with decreases in the number of teaching staff between 2008 and 2010, indicating government's lack of commitment towards the sector (Mayai et al 2011).

Ignoring education, especially during war, has dire consequences for South Sudan's future. In the short-term, little attention to matters related to formal education in the Upper Nile region may result in 70 percent of current emergency support towards education in the affected states being lost (Education Cluster 2014). As development partners lose focus due to lack of local efforts by the government as well as the rebels, possibly discontinuing financial and material support to individual schools and teachers, educational programs in the affected areas are bound to take a backseat, at least temporarily. Essentially, the affected South Sudanese generations are likely to be deprived of quality economic skills vital for building their future, and become ripe for gang life and mobilization into armed, violent groups. Educational structures are likely to cease to exist as the war continues and the facilities become homes for both the displaced civilians and soldiers.

The long-term risks include a production of an unskilled generation of South Sudanese, which implies potential economic disparities and persistent instability, disappearance of quality educational infrastructure, loss of experienced teachers to other more stable and lucrative economic industries, emigration, and the emergence of child exploitation activities.

III. Current Humanitarian Efforts

A High-level Humanitarian Conference on South Sudan recently convened in Oslo, Norway, placed education and the protection of vulnerable populations as key elements of international intervention (Education Cluster 2014). The meeting recommended the international institutions concerned with educational services to support learning processes and physical protection for the internally displaced populations. This

internationally birthed effort has since the beginning of the year enabled 120,000 students and teachers to receive educational support (Education Cluster 2014). Still, the Education Cluster expresses concern that only 15 percent of humanitarian funding is allocated for education, which is quickly getting exhausted. In addition, the government and the rebels have not been making sufficient efforts to supplement ongoing international goodwill. It is important to note that the immediate children and families of the majority of the leaders (on both sides) are being schooled in foreign countries at very high cost to the local economy.

IV. Policy Recommendations

Prioritizing education is a necessity for both physical stability and economic prosperity in a South Sudanese society. South Sudan's literacy rate stands only at 27 percent (National Bureau of Statistics 2008), and this insufficiency of a functionally literate and numerate citizenry bears negatively on current widespread political and social conditions the nascent country faces, including abject poverty, insecurity, injustice, and dire health outcomes. Substantial investments in education, whether during wartime or thereafter, are critical in ensuring needed political and economic transformations in South Sudan. An educated generation constitutes an informed citizenry with functional skills suitable for efficiently and effectively managing its affairs. An effective education supports peace and stability through catechism of fundamental ideals. We offer the following recommendations, both to the government and the donor or humanitarian community. The rest of our recommendations are drawn from Education Cluster's recent report.

The current humanitarian efforts spearheaded by international donors should support education in emergency programming by investing 4 percent of all humanitarian funding towards education as an important instrument of future stabilization (Education Cluster 2014). The Education Cluster suggests that the sector needs at least \$27 million to meet urgent educational needs well into December 2014. The program advises that education should be considered an integral part of the humanitarian response as it corresponds to the Oslo's recent commitments.

Furthermore, education needs recognizing as part of the multi-sector humanitarian response, including cluster representation in all needs assessments involving both the government and the humanitarian community. This means including education in emergency programming in the provision of services, and funding it through the Common Humanitarian Fund baskets.

The role of the government is critical in the provision of social services. Consequently, we urge the Government of South Sudan to regularly compensate the teachers in the most-affected areas, making disbursements for already delayed incentives as promptly as possible. To continue to keep the educational processes afloat at the time of crisis the Ministry of Education must "ensure timely circulation of directives for teachers and other education personnel on administration and jurisdiction issues affecting schools and learning in the affected areas, as well as adequate follow-up actions" (Education Cluster 2014) The Ministry of Education must continue to be actively engaged in helping the displaced students to sit for national examinations, providing conditional incentives for

the highly disadvantaged districts. The Ministry of Education “must do all possible to safeguard schools, so they can be used for educational purposes.”

Finally, security stabilization in South Sudan is fundamental in attempts to promote sound political and social outcomes in the country. This calls for peaceful and immediate resolution of the current violence, urging all the stakeholders to unconditionally end ongoing hostilities and allow for constitutional and political transformations to take shape. This is critical in light of the fact that quality education is a consequence of just and lasting peace. In a nutshell, safeguarding security and promoting just peace is to cultivate a dignified, progressive, and prosperous society.

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